

27

*The National
Short Ballot
Organization*

Year Book

February, 1914

The Short Ballot Principle

AS OFFICIALLY DEFINED BY
THE NATIONAL SHORT BALLOT ORGANIZATION

THE dangerously great power of politicians in our country is not due to any peculiar civic indifference of the people, but rests on the fact that we are living under a form of democracy that is so unworkable as to constitute in practice a pseudo-democracy. It is unworkable because—

First—It submits to popular election offices which are too unimportant to attract (or deserve) public attention, and,

Second—It submits to popular election so many offices at one time that many of them are inevitably crowded out from proper public attention, and,

Third—It submits to popular election so many offices at one time as to make the business of ticket-making too intricate for popular participation, whereupon some sort of private political machine becomes an indispensable instrument in electoral action.

Many officials, therefore, are elected without adequate public scrutiny, and owe their selection not to the people, but to the makers of the party ticket, who thus acquire an influence that is capable of great abuse.

The “SHORT BALLOT” principle is—

First—That only those offices should be elective which are important enough to attract (and deserve) public examination.

Second—That very few offices should be filled by election at one time, so as to permit adequate and unconfused public examination of the candidates, and so as to facilitate the free and intelligent making of original tickets by any voter for himself unaided by political specialists.

Obedience to this fundamental principle explains the comparative success of democratic government in the cities of Great Britain and other foreign democracies, as well as in Galveston, Des Moines and other American cities that are governed by “Commissions.”

The application of this principle should be extended to all cities, counties and states.

Progress Toward Simplified Government

THE National Short Ballot Organization is primarily a publicity bureau, whose purpose is to tell the American people about simplified government; the theory of it, its progress, the beneficial results of its operation.

A nucleus of membership was obtained in 1910 by inviting between 100,000 and 200,000 lawyers, civic workers and college professors in all parts of the country to indicate their belief in the Short Ballot principle. About 15,000 did so—the leading civic spirits in hundreds of localities and in every state. They constitute our list of “Advocates”—a sort of reserve force, which we call into action when their influence is especially needed. Many are contributors. Others have been of great assistance to the work in keeping us in touch with conditions in their localities and spreading our gospel.

At the outset, in the spring of 1910, it was recognized by the Advisory Board and the Executive Committee that the chief and most effective means of reaching the people was through the daily, weekly and monthly periodicals. Accordingly, there was instituted a press service which supplies to about twelve hundred of the larger newspapers and magazines of general circulation the latest news of activity looking toward the adoption of simplified forms of government and discussions of the principles of the Short Ballot from many angles.

The result of this continuous service has been the complete acceptance by practically all the important papers of the country of the Short Ballot principle. The office has had in mind, in the case of the larger papers, not to secure immediate and direct publication

of its bulletins so much as to saturate the editors and editorial writers with the Short Ballot idea. This policy has proven successful. The editorial columns of many such papers as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Record-Herald*, the *Newark Evening News*, contain frequent discussions of the principle, especially by way of interpretation of local issues. Scores of city papers which suffer somewhat less than those mentioned from the daily deluge of news items make more direct use of our printed matter; such papers, for example, as the *Rochester Democrat*, the *Denver News*, the *Dallas News*, etc. In 1912 a group of about forty such papers published a series of signed articles from this office on the progress of the Short Ballot movement. Still smaller papers use our free "plate" service, a rather expensive undertaking which is not resorted to oftener than once a year. In the summer of 1911, 100 papers printed our series of twelve articles "The Short Ballot—A Progressive Idea." In 1913 over 600 papers printed a six-article series on "Woodrow Wilson and the Short Ballot," the expense of publishing which was something over \$900.

The SHORT BALLOT BULLETIN, an eight-page leaflet, has been published bi-monthly and sent free to a large list of newspapers, public libraries and civic organizations. Special numbers are sent free also to the 15,000 Short Ballot Advocates and regularly to contributors and BULLETIN subscribers (the subscription price is twenty-five cents a year).

In addition to this newspaper publicity, important assistance to the movement has been secured at the hands of the leading magazines. *The Outlook*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Everybody's*, *The Independent*, *The Review of Reviews*, *The National Municipal Review*, *The American City*, *The Annals of the American Academy*, and minor periodicals have each published one or more articles prepared by officers of the organization and dealing with the general movement or some of its special phases.

Converting the Political Leaders.

More definite, and for immediate purposes more important, support has been that of party and public leaders great and small in many of the states. In the Feb. 1913 issue of the BULLETIN we recorded the fact that eleven governors had recently dealt favorably and, in some cases, ardently, with the Short Ballot in their inaugural addresses or other significant public utterances. Governor Cox of Ohio, for instance, made the Short Ballot measures a part of the administration program. In our BULLETIN for October 1912 we reprinted fourteen state platform pledges. In the states of Ohio and Illinois all three leading parties went on record in favor of the principle.

Co-operation with the Colleges.

Realizing that the fight for the Short Ballot would necessarily be a long one, we have not neglected the rising generation. In over one hundred colleges and schools (including all the larger universities), our pamphlets, furnished free, are in use in class rooms. We also have frequent occasion to give individual assistance to college debaters.

Actual Results.

But the net result of three years' work is not a mere general assent to an abstract principle. The Ballot has actually been shortened!

The greatest progress thus far has been made in California, where five offices have been removed from the state ticket and the county home rule amendment has been passed and already utilized in two counties. These measures were the immediate outcome of our publicity work, as one of the state leaders informed us. Governor Hiram W. Johnson gave strong personal and special support to the movement.

In Ohio, after a close but losing fight in the constitutional convention of 1912, Governor Cox put the Short

Ballot idea up to the legislature of 1913 and finally succeeded in getting it to take off the ballot by statute the offices of the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Dairy and Food Commissioner and to provide for their appointment by the Governor and the Supreme Court respectively. The same legislature submitted to the people in November 1913 two Short Ballot constitutional amendments. One of these made the Attorney-General, Auditor of State, Secretary of State and State Treasurer responsible, by appointment, to the Governor. The other removed from the constitution the clause which requires the county clerk, sheriff and district attorney to be elective, and give the legislature power to determine the method of selecting county officers. Both these amendments were defeated by large majorities; though they carried the three most important counties, Cuyahoga (Cleveland) Lucas (Toledo) and Hamilton. The adverse vote was heaviest in the country districts, owing largely to imperfect and insufficient publicity methods.

In Michigan, at the legislative session of 1913, a Short Ballot amendment applying to state officers carried in the Senate with but three dissenting votes but was lost in the lower house.

In Iowa, statutes have been passed which have taken the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Reporter of the Supreme Court off the ballot and made them appointive by the Governor and the Supreme Court respectively.

Bills of similar import were introduced, entirely on local initiative, in the legislatures of Washington, Idaho, Iowa, New Mexico and Florida.

In New York, a bill affecting the state ticket in practically the same way as the one in Ohio has been introduced regularly for three sessions but has made little headway until this year. It now has the specific approval of the Republican and Progressive parties. Governor Glynn and the independent faction of the Democratic party favor at least the underlying principle.

Other measures prepared by the New York Organization provided for,

(1) A semi-appointive judiciary under which the Governor would be required to recommend candidates for the Supreme Court of Appeals, in addition to which other candidates may be nominated by petition, all to appear on a non-partisan section of the ballot.

(2) An amendment to the constitution removing the present requirement that the district attorney, county clerk, register of deeds and sheriff in counties must be elective.

(3) An optional bill providing, as an alternative to the present up-state county system, a simplified form of county government, with a strong board of three commissioners elected at large to replace the present county board of supervisors, and providing for the exercise of their functions through an appointive well-paid County Manager who would give all his time to the work and be chief executive of the county.

The New York organization has also just submitted to the legislature a bill to abolish the coroner's office in New York City, and provide a more adequate system in its place.

The unique, and in many ways radical plan of state organization proposed by the "People's Power Group" in Oregon emphasized the Short Ballot feature.

CITY GOVERNMENT

THE field in which the Short Ballot idea has reached the greatest degree of success and popularity is city government. The commission government movement was well under way when this organization opened its office. Commission government, however, was not thoroughly understood. There was a distinct danger that, as the movement spread, superficial features of the Des Moines plan would be emphasized at the expense of the basic idea of simplicity. Long ballot commission charters had made their appearance. This organization conceived it a duty and an opportunity to use such

The National S

January 1,

CAS

RECEIPTS

Balance on hand January 1, 1913	\$2.96
Contributions and subscriptions	8,174.20
"Digest" sales	870.39
Sales of pamphlets and books	477.51
Miscellaneous	4.25

Total..... \$9,529.31

Ballot Organization

January 1, 1914

EMENT

PAYMENTS

Salaries		\$3,667.70
General Expenses:		
Rent	550.00	
Stationery	108.88	
Press clippings	352.95	
Telephone	70.53	
Postage (correspondence)...	139.12	
Office incidentals	103.85	1,325.33
Publicity:		
Short Ballot Bulletin (print and mail)	819.21	
Free "plate" service	980.20	
Other publicity service	2,032.03	
Advertising	20.00	
Books purchased for sale...	41.67	
Special Ohio campaign	250.00	4,143.11
"Digest" expense		313.12
Traveling expenses		31.76
Miscellaneous		9.37
Balance January 1, 1914		38.92
Total		<hr/> \$9,529.31

influence as it had to keep the movement in the straight and narrow path, making available its facilities and experience to local reform leaders less fortunately situated. We established a standard definition of a commission or "Short Ballot" charter. Our office gradually came to be recognized as a national clearing house for information and suggestion in this field. In three years we have built up a mechanism for reaching the leaders of the local movements in their earliest stages. Hundreds of inquiries are answered every month.

The "Loose-Leaf Digest of Short Ballot Charters."

One of the most important instruments for propagating the Short Ballot idea is the "Loose-Leaf Digest of Short Ballot Charters," which was compiled in our office. This volume contains in a form which permits of indefinite expansion chapters on the theory of commission government, outlines of all legislation on the subject, both general and special, full texts of the most significant Short Ballot charters and a complete bibliography. At the present writing (Aug. 1913) it has grown to a bulky volume of about 600 large pages. It has been used by every important charter revision committee which has been in session during the last three years. In several cities the commissions found it worth while to purchase a volume at \$5.00 for each of their members. Nearly 700 copies have been sold. This part of our work, which has been largely self-sustaining, has had a far-reaching effect.

Aid to Local Campaigns.

Our pamphlets describing the commission plan of government from the Short Ballot standpoint and setting forth its beneficial results have been sold at cost by the tens of thousands and in scores of cities. We have given away some thousands more to people who were anxious to "start something" in their towns.

Not that the organization has given its endorsement to

the Des Moines plan, or to any other specific plan of Short Ballot government; on the contrary, its policy has always been to give full publicity to every plan of Short Ballot government which met an official definition of the term.

The City Manager Plan.

The nation-wide interest in the city manager plan and its adoption in fourteen cities is directly due to the activities of this organization. For while it is true that Staunton, Va., had a city manager before our organization was instituted, his existence was known to but few; and no city outside Virginia had followed Staunton's example. In the latter part of 1910 the so-called "Lockport" bill was drafted in our office and given wide publicity. The text was used as a model for the structure of government in the charters drafted and adopted in Dayton and Springfield, Ohio; Phoenix, Arizona; Manistee and Cadillac, Mich.; Hickory and Morganton, N. C.; and in the charters which were framed, though not adopted, in Youngstown and Elyria, Ohio; and other cities. In every instance the charter commissions in these cities became acquainted with the city manager plan through our "Digest" and other literature prepared by our office for the Sumter Chamber of Commerce or the Lockport Board of Trade, and our Bulletin.

Another activity in city government has been the criticism of drafts of city charters. Our constant touch with the movements in the direction of new charters, our familiarity with all the legislation on the subject has been put at the disposal of charter commissioners in many cities small and large, without any charge. In the case of several cities this has meant a voluminous correspondence.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

IN giving publicity to the defects of county government this organization was a pioneer. No volume had been published on the subject; it was extremely

difficult to discover anything more than sketchy references to the subject in general volumes on local government. In the fall of 1912 we persuaded the American Academy of Political and Social Science to publish a volume on county government, following in a large measure the table of contents furnished by us. This volume has been published and contains twenty-three monographs descriptive, critical and constructive. It presents a striking testimonial of the dire need of Short Ballot activity in this department of government.

Out of the county home rule amendment in California have come important Short Ballot results. The Los Angeles county charter was drafted under Short Ballot influences and will be the instrument by which the ballot in this large community will be shortened by thirteen officers. The secretary and executive secretary addressed the charter revision commissioners during the progress of their work. The finished document was reprinted and distributed by this organization. The San Bernardino county charter follows Short Ballot principles even more consistently.

In Alameda County, Cal., a group above 100 civic organizations under the leadership of the Tax Association is working toward the adoption of a Short Ballot charter. Their activities are based upon a plan drawn up in our office as a suggestion for applying the Short Ballot principle so as to eliminate duplicate offices and bring the government of the county and its ten or more constituent municipalities under an effective and economical system of administration.

During the winter of (1913-14) the New York organization is holding a series of Conferences for the Study and Reform of County Government. At these meetings addresses are given by men especially (in some cases officially) conversant with the county problem and are stenographically reported and published. These published reports promise to be an important contribution to a very much neglected subject.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

THE National Short Ballot Organization does not, of course, direct any local movements. The New York Short Ballot Organization looks after the application of the principle in its state. Committees of this association have prepared a number of important measures and defended them at the last three sessions of the legislature. Of these, the most important was a constitutional amendment applying to state officers, on practically the same lines as the amendment under discussion in Ohio.

Wherever possible, authority is delegated to act as its representative to established civic bodies, which seem in a peculiarly good strategic position to carry on a local campaign. In Ohio, this work has been done most commendably and effectively by the Civic League of Cleveland. The Chicago City Club is principally responsible for the formation of the Illinois Short Ballot Association. The New Hampshire Short Ballot Organization was created at the instance of the National Organization to handle Short Ballot matters in the constitutional convention of 1912. Each of these organizations has prepared a monograph setting forth conditions and suggestions for applying the Short Ballot principle in their respective states.

The Kentucky Short Ballot Organization was instituted in January, 1914, by a combination of civic organizations in Louisville. Its most immediate object is to secure commission government legislation affecting first, third and fourth class cities.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION

THE general policies of the organization are determined by an Advisory Board which holds a meeting once a year. In the interim the Board is communicated with on questions of importance and any member may exercise a temporary veto until the next meeting.

Questions of method are submitted to an Executive

Committee, which consists at present of the following: Walter T. Arndt, Secretary, The Municipal Government Association of New York State; Prof. Charles A. Beard of Columbia University; Robert S. Binkerd, Secretary, The City Club of New York, Arthur C. Ludington, and the Secretary.

FINANCES

THE Secretary-Treasurer receives no salary. The paid working staff consists of the Executive Secretary, a stenographer and an office boy. Such has been the equipment during the past two years.

Expenses are met in the main by voluntary contributions. These range all the way from one dollar to \$1,000.00. This source of revenue is supplemented by the sale of books and pamphlets.

Short Ballot Literature

Pamphlets Free on Request :

The Short Ballot.

The Story of the Short Ballot Cities

(Special rates in quantities)

Short Ballot Bulletin (bi-monthly), 25 cents
per year. Sample copies.

The First Short Ballot County.

*Short Ballot Cartoons.

*The Short Ballot in New Hampshire.

*The Need of the Short Ballot in Ohio.

The Short Ballot in Illinois.

Reports of Conference for the Study and
Reform of County Government.

The City Manager Plan (36 pp., reprinted
from Beard's Digest of Short Ballot
Charters), 25 cents.

Loose-Leaf Digest of Short Ballot Charters
(Commission Government). \$5.00 net.
Descriptive circular on request.

Short Ballot Principles—By Richard S.
Childs (Houghton Mifflin Co.). By mail
\$1.10.

County Government (The American Acad-
emy of Political and Social Science).
\$1.00 net.

* Out of print.

THE NATIONAL SHORT BALLOT ORGANIZATION

President

WOODROW WILSON

Washington, D. C.

Vice-Presidents

WINSTON CHURCHILL, Cornish, N. H.

HORACE E. DEMING, New York, N. Y.

BEN B. LINDSEY, Denver, Col.

JOHN MITCHELL, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

WILLIAM S. U'REN, Oregon City, Ore.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE, Emporia, Kan.

CLINTON ROGERS WOODRUFF, Philadelphia, Pa.

Advisory Board

LAWRENCE F. ABBOTT

HENRY JONES FORD

RICHARD S. CHILDS

NORMAN HAPGOOD

WOODROW WILSON

Secretary and Treasurer

RICHARD S. CHILDS

Executive Secretary

H. S. GILBERTSON

383 Fourth Avenue, New York